United Nations

Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General to travel to Pakistan on Friday, 24 April, in connection with developments in Afghanistan; his Personal Representative for that country, Benon Sevan, calls for cessation of hostilities and amnesty for all.

+ Secretary-General, arriving in New Delhi for official visit, declines to comment on Afghanistan situation; holds talks with Thai Prime Minister and King Bhumipol Adulyadej in Bangkok before leaving for India.

+ Afghanistan says it will "not spare any effort" in cooperating with United Nations towards political settlement; promises to ensure security and safety of United Nations staff and personnel of diplomatic missions.

+ Disarmament Commission session begins annual session at Headquarters, hearing statement by Chairman and by Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

+ Sudan approves United Nations relief flights from Kenya into the country until end of April, enabling resumption of humanitarian assistance to large numbers of people in urgent need in southern Sudan; field assessment work to begin on 2 May in Khartoum.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali will travel to Pakistan on Friday, 24 April, in connection with developments in Afghanistan, his Spokesman announced today.

Spokesman François Giuliani also told correspondents at Headquarters that the Secretary-General's Personal Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Benon Sevan, was traveling in different areas of Afghanistan and meeting with key commanders in an effort to find a peaceful solution to the conflict.

According to a communiqué from Kabul, Mr. Sevan appealed yesterday, at a press conference in Kabul, to all Afghans to "exercise restraint and show forgiveness". He said "almost all the hurdles and difficult issues have been

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resolved and the main principles agreed and accepted although some details still need to be worked out".

Mr. Sevan had clarified that, despite new reports, there was indeed no "United Nations plan" as such, but only a set of principles, such as the need for dialogue among Afghans. Whatever the Afghans themselves chose as their transitional mechanism, would have to be accepted and respected by all non-Afghans.

Mr. Sevan called for "a cessation of hostilities, an amnesty for all, security and human rights for all Afghans, protection of property and the opening of all supply routes for food and other essential items". He also urged that a transfer of power be carried out in an orderly way to prevent chaos and bloodshed. Afghans should think of themselves first and foremost as Afghans and not as members of any particular ethnic group, he said. "What is essential is the restoration of sovereignty and the safeguarding of the territorial integrity of Afghanistan. The challenge to Afghanistan now is to win the peace and not the war", he said.

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The Secretary-General ended today his official visit to Thailand and arrived in New Delhi for a two-day visit to India before going to Pakistan on Friday, 24 April, in connection with developments in Afghanistan.

Upon arrival at New Delhi airport, the Secretary-General made a statement saying he did not want to comment on the problem of Afghanistan. "I just want to remind you that the achievements of the United Nations are to maintain the political independence of Afghanistan, to maintain its territorial integrity and to achieve national reconciliation", the Secretary-General said. The United Nations was trying to do its best to achieve these objectives, he added.

Before leaving Bangkok, Mr. Boutros-Ghali met with the Interim Prime Minister of Thailand, Anand Panyarachun, with whom he discussed the support of Thailand for the activities of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); the active role of Thailand in the battle against drugs; Thailand's economic performance and dynamism in the promotion of economic and social development, as well as cooperation in the area; and its support to the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the main arm of the United Nations in the Asian and Pacific region.

In Phnom Penh yesterday, 20 April, Mr. Boutros-Ghali appealed to the international community for $593 million to Cambodia for food, health services, shelter, education, training and the restoration of its basic infrastructure, public utilities and supportive institutions. Included in the appeal were additional funds for the repatriation of refugees.

In a speech delivered in the Cambodian capital, he said the funds were urgently needed to help the nation recover from more than two decades of confrontations and suffering and to ensure that the political process that has put the nation on the road to democracy was not compromised.

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Concerning the repatriation of around 360,000 refugees from border camps in Thailand, he said the donor community had already responded to an earlier appeal to contribute through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). But, he noted, substantial financial needs had not yet been covered and additional funds were still required if the repatriation process, which began last month, was to proceed smoothly.

Also yesterday, in a statement to the Cambodian Supreme National Council -- the legitimate authority in that country -- the Secretary-General hailed the accession by Cambodia to two international Human Rights Covenants, saying the signing of those instruments was a "historic and fundamental step by Cambodia" in the implementation of last October's Paris Agreement. By its accession, he said, Cambodia had undertaken formal international responsibilities in regard to respecting and protecting the basic rights of all its population.

The Secretary-General went on to say that it was now incumbent on the Cambodian parties to accept their responsibilities and to take the necessary measures to ensure the concrete application of the principles established in the Covenants. In this way, he said, "they will show their willingness to overcome the serious mistakes of the past, to open a new page in the history of Cambodia and to lay the foundations for a free society, based on law and justice."

The two Covenants signed by Cambodia -- the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights -- were adopted by the General Assembly in 1966.

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Afghanistan has said it was of the conviction that, "under the present circumstances, with the stepping aside of President Najibullah, the ground has been paved more than ever before for the cessation of war and ensurrance of peace in the country".

According to a statement issued on 16 April, the Republic of Afghanistan said it supported the Security Council's call for a political solution to the 13-year conflict in that country and declared that it would spare no effort in cooperating with the United Nations.

The statement further promised to ensure the safety and security of United Nations employees and other diplomatic personnel, as well as their full freedom of movement, as called for by the Council.

The Afghan statement was made following the Security Council's appeal on Thursday, 16 April, urging all concerned to "display restraint" and calling for support for the United Nations plan. It was transmitted by the Afghan Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Waheedullah, in a letter addressed to the Secretary-General, dated 20 April. (S/23823)

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Vladimir Petrovsky, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, said yesterday that the full range of the United Nations disarmament machinery "should be utilized in a more constructive and innovative manner" for the promotion of disarmament and the preservation of peace.

In a statement to the opening meeting of the Disarmament Commission's 1992 session, the Under-Secretary-General said that such machinery should also be used to improve the procedures for dealing with disarmament.

Under the agenda adopted yesterday, the Commission plans to resume its discussion of efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons, regional disarmament and the impact of scientific and technological development on international security. It also expects to conclude its consideration of the question of objective information on military matters.

In his opening statement, Chairman of the Commission Andre Erdos (Hungary), said the new world and the long-envisioned system of collective security did not come into existence by themselves, and the progress achieved did not automatically guarantee the maintenance of peace, security and justice. In moments of historic transformations, fundamental changes were required. He hoped the reinvigorated Disarmament Commission would live up to the expectations and requirements of the new era.

During yesterday's general debate, the representative of Sweden proposed a new item for the Commission's agenda from 1993 through 1995 -- "General guidelines for non-proliferation" with emphasis on weapons of mass destruction.

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The Government of Sudan has agreed to allow United Nations relief flights from Kenya into three of four locations in the country until the end of April 1992, according to a United Nations spokesman at Headquarters today.

The resumption of the United Nations relief flights, which had been suspended for over 40 days, came in response to efforts by the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Jan Eliasson, who was requested by the Secretary-General to give special attention to the question of the humanitarian situation in the Sudan. Last week, Mr. Eliasson told correspondents at Headquarters that the problem in the Sudan was one of access and described the situation there as urgent. He also pointed out that the United Nations had been conducting its relief operations in the Sudan at considerable risk.

The authorization by the Sudanese Government has allowed humanitarian assistance to reach a large number of people in urgent need of relief assistance in Southern Sudan. However, the Government had not yet acceded to a request to permit flights to a fourth region, as well as other areas of the

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Sudan, according to the spokesman. He said an agreement had been reached to undertake a joint United Nations/Government assessment of the emergency food and non-food relief and structure needs for the displaced. The field assessment work will begin on 2 May in Khartoum.

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